

Corps of Engineers

## Special points of interest:

- Phosphorus Sediment to be Scrapped from Lake Okeechobee
- Traveling Safety Ring Symbolizes Support for Water Safety
- Lake O reaches historic low level mark
- All Sea Turtles are Listed as Endangered
- Multiple agencies involved in controlling fire along western shore

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# Bigwater News

June 1, 2007

## Muck Removal Project to Enhance Environment

For years phosphorus saturated muck has been accumulating in Lake Okeechobee. Lying settled on the lake bottom sediment containing phosphorus poses few environmental problems. However, if the lake bottom becomes disturbed and phosphorus containing sediment becomes mixed back into the water column substantial trouble can occur.

Too much phosphorus in the water stimulates algae and plant growth. This can lead to accelerated growth of nuisance plants and algal

blooms, which in turn may shade out and kill more ecologically important plants.

Plants killed by shading may settle to the lake bottom and be feed upon by bacteria, fungi and microbes, who strip the water of oxygen during the feeding process. This can lead to little or no oxygen remaining in the water and stress or kill fish and fish eggs, insects and their larvae, snails, mussels, etc. An entire ecosystem can collapse because of too much phosphorus in the water.

Recent drought has provided an excellent opportunity for removing phosphorus laden sediment by conducting muck scraping in Fisheating Bay, South Bay and Eagle Bay.

Removing muck material during dry conditions is more efficient and cost-effective than in an aquatic environment and is less likely to result in negative impacts to water quality.

(continued on pg. 2)

## Water Safety—Coast to Coast Campaign

On Monday May 7, 2007 Supervisory Park Ranger Art Ruebenson met with Diane Holm, Drowning Prevention Coordinator for Lee County at the W.P. Franklin Recreation Area to sign the "safety ring" as part of the Water Safety - Coast to Coast Campaign.

This program involves transporting a "safety ring" to various aquatic facilities from Lee County on Florida's west coast, to West Palm Beach on the east coast. At each stop an agency representative will sign the ring as a symbolic support of the effort. Several Lee County partners provide support: The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida, SWIM Lee (local drowning prevention task force), Lee County Department of Parks and Recreation, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Worldwide Safe Kids and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (continued on pg. 2)



Art Ruebenson & Diane Holm

## Canaveral Lock Employees Save Endangered Sea Turtle

On April 14 Ben Baggs, Canaveral lock leader, spotted an endangered Green Turtle exhibiting odd behavior in the gate recess area. Ben recalled seeing the rear end of the turtle floating at the surface while its head anchored vertically under the water. He could tell the turtle was injured. The turtle appeared very weak and had difficulty coming up for air. Ben believed a boat propeller collided with the back end of the turtle's shell and injured its back flippers.



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The photo is a bit deceiving in that the sea turtle weighed approx. 80 lbs.

Ben and fellow lock operator Tim Holem tried for hours to pull the injured turtle from the water without success. The following day Tim came up with an idea to maneuver a 4-foot square section of expanded metal tied with rope at each corner down 15-ft to the base of the recess, to the location of the lumbering turtle.

Thankfully Tim's ingenuity "worked like a charm", and the turtle was pulled to safety. The Sea Turtle Preservation Society (STPS) was contacted who dispatched a volunteer to the site. The turtle was transported to their rehabilitation hospital in Ponce Inlet, FL. Soon after the turtle arrived he was given the name Motley. Recent updates inform us that Motley has regained some mobility in his back flippers, but it remains unclear if he can be returned to the wild.



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Tim Holem (left) & STPS volunteer Dave Hochberg

[Related article pg. 3](#)

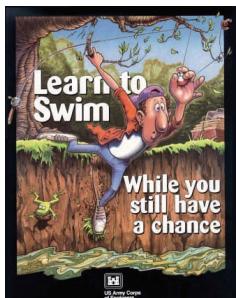
## Coast to Coast Campaign

(continued from pg. 1)

Drowning is a tremendous problem throughout the state of Florida and was recently highlighted in the Department of Health's "Drowning Prevention Initiative Workgroup Meeting" held October 27, 2006. In that meeting the magnitude of the drowning problem was identified, and Florida has certain statistical distinctions in the area of drown-

ing that needs to be addressed.

The workgroup conveyed that Florida has the highest drowning death rate in the U.S. for children ages 1-4. Despite local ordinances and a state statute requiring safety features for backyard swimming pools, last year enough children drowned in Florida to fill four preschool classrooms.



Water safety awareness can prevent drowning accidents.

## Muck Removal...



South Bay area to be scraped

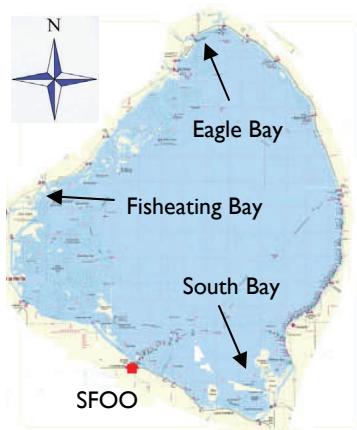
(continued from pg. 1)

The Corps has issued a environmental resource permit to Glades County and South Florida Water Management District to conduct muck removal at the three Lake Okeechobee sites.

Dry muck removal bulldozers will scrape muck and sediment down to the primary sand bottom and cre-

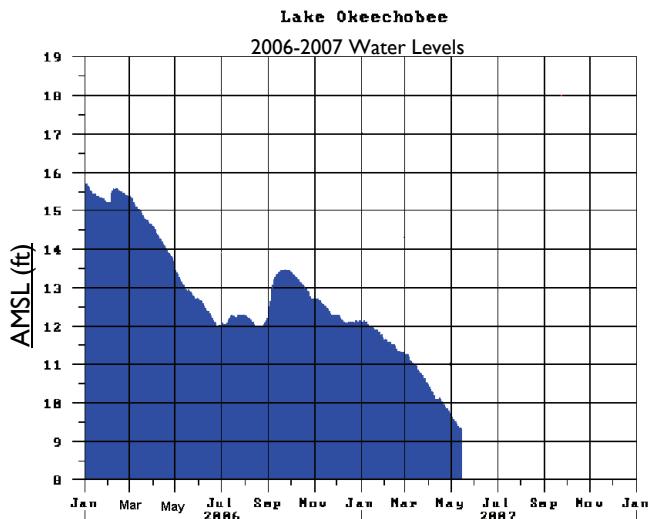
ate stock piles. The stock piles will then be transported by dump truck to designated storage areas.

Muck scraping will reduce the Lake's internal phosphorus load and provide an opportunity for native submerged aquatic vegetation to reestablish in these areas.



## Lake Level

All-time Lows	AMSL (ft)
May 31, 2007 <b>(New Record Low)</b>	8.94
May 24, 2001	8.97
July 1981	9.79
AMSL—Above Mean Sea Level	



## Green Sea Turtle

The Green Turtle is one of only seven species of sea turtles in the world. All seven species of marine turtles are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Six of these are found in U.S. waters: Green, Hawksbill, Kemp's Ridley, Leatherback, Loggerhead and Olive Ridley.

Green sea turtles get their name from the color of their body fat, which is green from the algae they eat. Adult green sea turtles are herbivores, meaning that they eat only plants. Juvenile green sea turtles on the other hand are carnivorous. Their diet consists of jellyfish and other invertebrates. Adult green sea turtles can weigh up to 500 pounds and are often found living near coral reefs and rocky shorelines where algae are plentiful.

There were once several million green sea turtles worldwide. Today, fewer than 200,000 nesting females are thought to remain. Coastal development, noise, lights and beach obstructions are disruptive to nesting areas and threaten this critical part of the sea turtle's life cycle. (Information was paraphrased or taken directly from [earthtrust.org](http://earthtrust.org) and [nmfs.noaa.org](http://nmfs.noaa.org))



## Love Bugs

Love Bugs may be long gone by the time this article is read, but their black and red bodies likely remain adhered to the windshields and front bumpers of your automobiles.

Love Bugs can number in the hundreds of thousand along roadways, and become embedded into passing vehicles. Having highly acidic bodies, they can etch pits into chrome and auto-

mobile paint. It's best to remove their remains within an hour or two to prevent vehicle damage.



Love bugs have many other colorful names which include, march fly, honey-moon fly, telephone bug, kissybug and double-headed bug.

The Love Bug spends the entirety of its life copulating with its mate, which likely explains its many romantic nick names.

The male and female attach themselves at the

rear of the abdomen and remain that way at all times, even in flight. In fact, after mating, the male dies and is dragged around by the female.

Knowing what it's like to be dragged around by a female, I'd like to impart my deepest regards to the male Love Bug.

Information was paraphrased or taken directly from [wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com)

## Lake Okeechobee Ablaze

On May 28, fire broke out in Buckhead Marsh just west of Pearce Canal. The fire initially moved in a slow decent to the south toward Indian Prairie, but quickly gained speed and strength.

Multiple agencies participated in a coordinated response to control the fire: South Florida Water Management District, Department of Forestry, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Glades County, Lakeport and Buckhead Fire Departments.

A backfire was set in Indian Prairie to intercept and halt incoming flames from the initial outbreak .

**Backfire:** a fire started to stop an advancing fire by creating a burned area in its path.

Strong winds, however, allowed the fire to push through the backburn and spread into the marsh at Harney Pond. As of today the fire continues to burn.

To date, approximately 9000-12,000 acres of marsh and upland habitat have burned. The source of the fire is unknown but is suspected to have been an intentional act.

The greatest danger posed by fire is the potential for it to "jump" the rim canal and tow ditch and damage private property.

Fire can be beneficial in releasing nutrients from burned plants, helping to stimulate growth in unproductive habitats. Fire also burns away thick, old growth vegetation and creates space for new plants to thrive.



## Quiz of the Month

1. Lake Okeechobee is the second largest freshwater lake located completely within U.S. borders. What is the first?
2. What is the state wildflower of Florida: A) Spiderwort B) Indian Blanket C) Coreopsis D) Lantana
3. Florida accounts for how much of the world's orange juice supply: A) 2% B) 10% C) 40% D) 70%
4. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approximately how many employees (military & civilian): A) 6,500 B) 15,000 C) 35,000 D) 48,000
5. Which is correct to say, "The yolk of the egg are white" or "The yolk of the egg is white"?

Answers on back page, left column.



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## Help Wanted:

If you would like to contribute ideas, information or photographs to the BigWater News email or phone Michael Boles – newsletter editor:

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## Quiz Answers

1. Lake Michigan
2. Coreopsis
3. 40%
4. 35,000
5. Neither, the yolk of the egg is yellow.



Corps of Engineers

The US Army Corps of Engineers South Florida Operations Office (SFOO) manages and operates five navigation locks and dams along the Okeechobee Waterway. The lock recreation areas provide recreational facilities for public use year-round. The waterway serves navigation, flood control, recreation, drinking water, and agricultural irrigation purposes. The waterway has a major impact on the local economy, as users include both recreational and commercial marine traffic.

## Acknowledgements

Everyone at SFOO gives Bob Siegmann—Lock and Dam Operator at Canaveral Lock—their warmest regards and best wishes for improved health as he slowly battles back from hip replacement surgery.



5/6/2000 18:53

Bob has been with the Corps for nearly 20 years. He started out as a survey boat captain on the survey boat, Sable.

## Welcome Aboard!

We'd like to congratulate & welcome the following staff members to the SFOO team:

Michael Mannhard—he is a Corps transfer hailing from Iowa and the Rock Island District. He will be working as a Lock and Dam Operator at St. Lucie Lock.



Mike Boles—also a transfer, comes from the New England District's Cape Cod Canal in Massachusetts. He will be working as a Biologist at SFOO.

Duane Kelley—recently accepted a new position as a Civil Engineer Technician. Previously, he had been working as a Lock & Dam Mechanic at SFOO.

Deb Niimi—has just returned from a temporary assignment in Kabul, Afghanistan working as a contact representative. She'll continue in this line of work here at SFOO. Previously, she was employed as a Civil Engineer Technician at Whiteman Air Force base in Missouri.